About Transport

in

Madras City.

FREE INDIA LTD.,
80, General Patters Road,
Madras-2.

E. R. Govindan,
Mg. Editor.

Date: 28—2—53.

Dear Mr. G. D.

As the convener of a committee constituted by the Council of Public Affairs to study the problem of State Transport, and submit a report thereon, I have pleasure in requesting your esteemed co-operation in this matter.

I am enclosing a copy of few notes concerning this problem. I will be thankful if you can kindly find time to go through this and offer your comments, criticisms and suggestions.

Thanking you and with regards,

Encl: 1.

Yours sincerely,
E. R. Govindan.

Mr. G. D. Naidu,
"Gopal Bagh",
Avanashi Road,
Coimbatore.

OUR STATE TRANSPORT.

The object of nationalising the transport system in the country is three-fold. The first and foremost of these objectives is to see that the transport system which is a social amenity to the nation is not run with a view to profit; secondly, the transport should not also likewise be costly; thirdly, it should be an easy and convenient method of travel for the common man.

Judged from these standpoints we may say that the Madras Transport falls short of all the expectations. It is neither cheap nor convenient nor is it run in the interests of the public.

Prior to the war, the City had a good system of transport, a few companies running buses and having a healthy competition among themselves. No standing passenger was allowed. The standing passenger system introduced during the war as an emergency has come to stay. One should naturally expect that with an increased load carried by the same transport there should be a corresponding reduction in fare, or atleast the increased load would compensate for the increased running cost. Now, perhaps, as the passengers are aware, fares have almost doubled and under the guise of nationalisation the fares have always been fixed to the disadvantage of the travelling public.

The State Transport is not also convenient to the public. Oftentimes one has to stand at bus

stops for anything between half an hour and one hour during the heavy traffic hours and even then, there is no knowing whether one would be able to get accommodation. Secondly, if one accidentally gets access into a bus he has to stand practically for the whole journey. The explanation is offered that this is a problem of peak-hour traffic but at all times the problem appears to be similar. It is not only in the peak-hour but almost at every hour of the day or night that we have to wait for a long time at every bus stop. One may wonder how this has happened when conditions prior to 1939 were most comfortable for travel in the city. There has of course been a steady increase in population but corresponding with the increase the number of buses plying in the city has not been increased and no attempt to increase the number of buses has been made by the Government. While there is dearth of sufficient transport in the City, the Government attempted to run transports in the mofussil, from the City to Tirupathi, from the City to Pallavaram, from the City to Pondicherry, etc. This diversion of available buses is one of the contributing factors to the congestion. New routes have also been opened within the City of Madras. It would appear that on looking at the transport map of the City of Madras that the intention of the Government is rather to chain the City than to provide a good transport system. Originally in 1939, there were straight routes keeping Central or Parry's Corner as the basic point covering the main distribution routes of the City such as Parry's Corner to Mylapore, Parry's Corner to Egmore, Parry's Corner to Aminjikarai, Parry's Corner to

Perambur, etc. Now we find that cutting across these long range routes we have transports running almost through all the crossroads; such roads as the College Road, Nungambakkam High Road, Lloyds Road, Cathedral Road, Peter's Road, etc., which were forbidden for bus traffic and which were safe for pedestrians, are all of them now invaded by the State Transport so that the mania of a walk has almost disappeared. Perhaps it is the intention of the sponsors of the transport to make people busminded. Otherwise there seems to be no justification for making these crossroads traffic. Similarly, Government have, in spite of the advice of the Advisory Committee thought it fit to run buses through Triplicane High Road and Chintadripet High Road which are perhaps the most congested roads in the City and which were immune from bus traffic. The Police who were at one time the custodians for regulating and for laying down through which roads buses could play, have apparently no voice in the matter as the Transport and the Police belong to the State. Another factor which has contributed indirectly to the congestion is the nature of the management. It would appear as though certain over-zealous officials want to starve the routes so that they could get the maximum return. Otherwise one fails to see how there could be such heavy traffic in buses at times other than the supposed peak-hours.

The State nationalising the transport has led to inefficiency and to heavy running cost. Labour is, as everyone knows, anxious to get the most for the least amount of work. In the case of a private

employer there is more amount of work, more control and extraction of work than under Government employ. Where the labour pitches up its demands very high Government could, through tribunals, get an arbitration but such bargaining power is lost if the Government itself is the employer. This has naturally resulted in slackening the service and increasing the cost considerably. It should be possible for an average individual in the future, if the state Transport is to be justified, to reach every corner of the City on payment of a charge not exceeding two annas. Unless this is attempted one must say that the State Transport has discredited itself.

What then is the remedy? The remedy is not far to seek. The number of transports should be increased while the routes should be minimised. It is not possible in a wide city like Madras for a public transport system to ply through every street. Broad streets which are accessible from adjoining areas should alone be chosen for the normal routes while other routes should be scrapped. At the same time, fares need reduction. Such reduced fares should naturally result in reduced demands from labour which at present would seem to conspire with the employer to swindle the public. The outlook of the officials should also be thoroughly altered. The profit motive which apparently has induced over-zealous officials to starve the routes and show a large return should change and the motive should hereafter be to serve the public through an easy convenient and cheap transport.

Failing this, remedy also lies with the public. Colleges have been able to run buses for picking up their students residing in various parts of the city at reasonable fares with reasonable comfort in travel. There are many offices and establishments in the city with staffs numbering hundreds living in various parts of the City. Similarly, there are associations of particular professions that have members distributed like the Advocates' Association, the Trades Association, etc. It should be possible for such establishments, offices and associations to own buses on a co-operative basis and run them exclusively for the benefit of their members. That seems to be the only way in which the problem can be tackled. From the experience of Colleges and Schools running buses it may be safely stated that such venture will not be unremunerative.

FREE INDIA LTD.,
80, General Patters Road,
Madras–2.

E. R. Govindan,
Mg. Editor.

Date: 25—3—53.

Dear Sri G. D.

I thank you for your kind letter of the 24th March.

I note what you say re: R. C. A. recorders. I will inform my friend.

May I request you to kindly send your comments re: the report of the Madras State Transport?

Thanking you and with regards,

Yours sincerely,
E. R. Govindan.

Mr. G. D. Naidu,
"Gopal Bagh",
Avanashi Road,
Coimbatore.

G. D. NAIDU,
"Gopal Bagh",
Avanashi Road,
Coimbatore.

Coimbatore,
Date : 6th April, 1953.

Dear friend,

Ref: Your letters dated 28-2-1953 & 25-3-53 with enclosure.

I am very sorry for this very unexpected delay. Of course, I need not mention the reason for this delay as you know it already.

In the report of the Madras Transport, the 1st para shows that the object of nationalising the transport is to give social amenities and not for making any profit. Then the transport should not be costly. And lastly, the transport should be easy and convenient for travel. In the subsequent para it is detailed that the Madras Transport falls short of all expectations.

In many of these points I entirely disagree. This report is taking the view of India as if she is in a higher level than U. S. A. and other similar countries in all walks of life. The fundamental mistake lies here. Some Municipal corporations in Western countries are running the transport with millions of dollars' loss continuously for years. Though these corporations are running with loss in

this industry, they get enormous profits in their area by the allied industries of automobile manufacturing, sales and servicing and other modes of transport. From that enormous profit, they spend a little money as loss in the transport in order to give amenities and convenience for their public, so that the other industries can be developed efficiently with more production for more use. The automobile industry itself has become one of the main national industries and is staying there. By this transport system innumerable industries are springing up every day in every corner of the country. There is every day development in oil industry, iron and steel production, glass production, paint production, tyre production, copper production, wood materials production wool and cotton materials production and several other productions in engineering and chemistry line.

Millions of people are engaged in the manufacturing, sales and servicing throughout the length and breadth of the country. If they produce, more oil, tyres and more engines, that means more employment, more profession-tax, more sales-tax and more income tax and more income in various other ways. Hence the loss in the transport is not a real loss. It is a profit because the transport amenities and conveniences are given for the public of which 90 to 95 percent are travelling only for their important daily work. Unfortunately in our country, the automobile car and bus transport and its industries have become a blood sucker, because transports are being used more for luxury than for more useful purposes. I agree that the

cheap transport is the foundation for the development of any country.

Leaving tyres and batteries, not even one percent of the equipments or parts used in the automobiles are manufactured here. Then in sales and servicing, efficiency and economy, we have carried out not even 25 percent in comparison with western countries. We can say our people and in general the condition of our country are not yet fit to use the automobile transport to that extent as used in western countries.

Perhaps, though we are not able to produce oil in such large quantities, if we are able to develop numerous industries by the help of coal, lignite, hydro-electric power, then we can think of this transport development. Only then, we need this mode of transport to give convenience and a fillip to the other industries. Until we are successful and able to complete the planned developments, we have to take the present need of transport as in war-time and we have to control the use of the transport with an economical view and with a national interest. If we take this view, where is the necessity for increased number of buses? Where is the necessity for reduction of fares? Where is the necessity for abolishing the Standing passengers system? There is much more room for reducing the number of automobiles, to increase the fares and other prices and to increase the standing passengers upto the safety limit.

Of course you have given one suggestion to eliminate cross-road traffic, which has created a

mania to wait for buses without making a few steps to reach the main road. This is a very good idea for the government to stop all cross road buses and to utilize them in the main roads alone. If it is done like this, i. e., if we increase the number of buses in the main road, half the number of the present strength of buses will do for the Madras city. But the government may say that lakhs and lakhs of rupees of profits will be lost by reducing the number of buses. I am sorry to say that government who are dealing with economic problems cannot understand that when they are earning one hundred rupees as profit in this transport, our country is losing one thousand rupees, while for every one rupee the government or public is earning as profit through local indigenous industries or in other developments, the country gains one thousand rupees.

Seeing the nationalization of industries and transport in other advanced countries, we are aping to do like that, which is one of the most dangerous courses taken in wrong direction. In this direction, Bombay, Delhi, Calcutta, Behar, Punjab, Hyderabad, to a little extent our State are competing with each other. Perhaps, Bombay, Calcutta and Delhi may get first class certificates or medals coming with a balance sheet containing one side figures showing profits, while practically this is the biggest national loss or waste. I think the Government and economists may feel and realise this scheme as dangerous in a few years or on the next day when a war breaks out, which is probable. Of course even now, Sir M. Visvesvaraya and very

very few industrialists know this situation. But politics is standing as a screen between the loss and profit, and between the good and bad. If I explain elaborately all the points, it will take hours. Hence I stop.

I have expressed the same views about the day to day waste to the transport minister at the time of the Chamber of Commerce Meeting at Coimbatore as well as at the time of the discussion about industries at the meeting of the All-India Manufacturers Organization held at Nagpur recently.

I am sorry my suggestions are not conducive to your views as expected by you. I have no objection for your publishing this in your valuable paper.

Yours sincerely,

G. D. Naidu.

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